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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

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AN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN GEORGIA

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The city systems of schools in Georgia have been developing for many years in harmony with progressive educational thought. Some of them have had a marked degree of excellence, but the rural schools have not improved correspondingly. For the last ten years the attention of educational leaders and of the leaders in the women's clubs has been turned to the problem of making these schools more efficient, and noteworthy success has been achieved in several directions. The model schools established, and in part supported, by the women's clubs have done some good work, and the undertaking of Mr. Ira Williams, first at Sand Hill and then at Temple, Ga., in the consolidation of schools, transportation of children, and the introduction of better methods, has been and is worthy of very high praise.

The practice school of the State Normal School of Georgia, located at Athens, is beginning now to do a work which, from the nature of the case, could not be done by any other of the agencies mentioned. In the winter of 1902, President E. C. Branson requested the writer, who was then entering the school as teacher of psychology and pedagogy, to study the needs of rural schools in Georgia, and to reorganize the work of teacher-training at the State Normal School with especial reference to furnishing better teachers for those schools. Captain S. D. Bradwell, the founder of the school, had appealed to the state legislature for funds for its support, with the promise that this should be the primary

object of the institution, and he had done one of the noblest pieces of pioneer work any state ever saw. Mr. E. C. Branson, upon his accession to the presidency, had pressed toward still greater efficiency, and it was his desire that the department of pedagogy which he was resigning should be expanded, kept in harmony with the best educational thought, and, at the same time, adapted to the needs of the country schools of Georgia.

On undertaking the solution of the problem, the writer believed that one of the most necessary factors was a practice school in connection with the pedagogical work of the State Normal School, this practice school to be itself an example of the working of the forces which were needed in the country schools. She did not believe that it would be wise to make it a model for country schools. It needed to be better than any country school in Georgia could be for years to come. The teachers who were best fitted for work in these schools were, it was believed, young men and women who could mold opinion and lead the people of Georgia toward a much higher type of school than any which they could establish or conduct under existing conditions, or in the present state of commonly received opinion. It was believed that the teachers in training at the State Normal School should work out in a practice school such a practical application of the theories which they accepted in their study of education as could afterward be modified, adapted to local conditions, and used in any school in Georgia. In April, 1902, in conference with Miss Lucy L. Davis, who had been called from the practice school of William and Mary College to be the principal of the new school, the writer made a plan for its conduct, which was submitted to President Branson and to Chancellor Hill, of the University of Georgia, and which, after its approval by them, was sent to Mr. George Foster Peabody, the constant benefactor of Georgia schools, with an appeal for a sum of money sufficient to provide a building and equipment with which the work could be begun. In May of the same year Mr. Branson submitted the plan to the board of trustees of the State Normal School, who promised to support the school when established. In June Mr. Peabody gave ten thousand dollars for a building, and three thousand five hundred for its equipment, the

promoters of the scheme believing that this sum would suffice for a modest beginning.

Various untoward circumstances interfered with the accomplishment of the project, but in the autumn of 1903 the building was opened and the work begun. From the first, the policy of the school, and of the teacher-training which was to go along with it, was clearly defined. It was believed that all elementary education should grow out of and be centered around the life and experience of the child; hence the work was to have its basis in the industries which are essential to the home and the community. It was seen that all education in country schools should help to foster a sort of life which would be so attractive to the best young men and young women in the country communities as to furnish a strong check to the growing tendency to leave the country and rush into city life, without any real fitness for that life. Hence, the element of beauty was to pervade the school and to transform, as far as possible, what might otherwise be considered sordid. It was hoped that, through the teachers trained in it, the practice school might do something to make daily work a joy instead of a burden; that it might hasten the time when men and women would find their pleasure *in* their work instead of in its pauses, and fill it with so much honesty, truth, and beauty that it would be a contribution of worth to the world. Art, music, literature, and history were to be integral parts of the work; were to be infused into the habitual expressions of daily life, and to become, as far as possible, necessary parts of the life of each child. The history-teaching was to be planned so as to bring the children to a consciousness of institutional development, the growth of civilization, the evolution of the industries which underlie human progress and their relation to social conditions. As a matter of course, it was understood that all this could not be formulated for children, but the work was to be so shaped that they would grow into an attitude which would embody the truth sought. It was understood that no such attitude could be reached under conditions of forced action or violent restraint, and the principle of interest was to be dominant in both teaching and government. The self-control which is the result of developing

character was to be sought, rather than enforced good behavior. The health, strength, and happiness of the children were to be well cared for, and, as aids to these, indoor and outdoor gymnasiums, playgrounds, and means for games were to be provided and the children encouraged to play. The organic unity of all stages of education was to be impressed upon the teachers in training, and it was desired that they should see all grades, from the kindergarten to the high school, so related that no sharp lines of separation could be drawn. The kindergarten of the practice school was to be only a grade of the school; the students were to observe and practice there just as they did in other grades, and without any other training than that given for the general work of elementary teaching. It was hoped that in the development of the work the same sort of continuity between the highest grammar and lowest high-school grades could be shown. The promoters of the scheme wished to enlist both children and practice-teachers in the service of civic beauty, and especially to stimulate the improvement of the buildings and grounds of country schools. As an example of what might be done with little or no expense, it was planned to have one section of the practice-school grounds made beautiful with the resources of the Georgia fields and forests. The absolute necessity of a library for every school was to be emphasized, and there was a distinct intention to plan all the work of the school so as to make it impossible of accomplishment without a library. At the same time, the teaching was to be such as could be done, with modifications, by an intelligent teacher in any country or city school. The work was not shaped with reference to a school of one teacher. The leading educators of Georgia were then, and are now, pressing the consolidation of schools and the transportation of children. The school of one teacher was disappearing with sufficient rapidity to justify confidence in its speedy extinction, and it was thought bad economy to train the students of the State Normal School for a decaying phase of education. There were minor points of emphasis, but those enumerated were made essential.

As a matter of course, all which was projected has not yet been accomplished. Some lines of work have not yet even been

entered upon. The scheme was sufficiently new to seem an innovation, and no teachers trained for this particular kind of education and with experience in it were available with the means at hand. The enterprise could not fail to suffer from the skepticism which always clogs far-reaching aims, and from the opposition which any departure from the time-honored must brave. That so much has been done in spite of difficulties seemingly insurmountable is due largely to the tireless energy, patience, and skill of Miss L. L. Davis, the principal, to the self-sacrificing devotion of some of her assistants, to the helpful sympathy of some of the parents of pupils, and to the intelligent faith and unwavering loyalty of the senior classes of the State Normal School.

The building which has been erected contains four large schoolrooms, four small classrooms, a kitchen, pantry, store closet, dining-room, library, weaving-room, gymnasium, shop, a small anthropometrical laboratory, and a principal's office. There are now five regular teachers, including the principal, and this year the practice-teachers are eighty in number. There are eight grades of children, including two kindergarten groups, and another will be added next year.

The work is based upon fundamental industries. The occupations used at present are cooking, sewing, spinning, weaving, gardening, drawing, clay-modeling, basketry, and woodwork. There are no "courses" in these. They are simply parts of the children's daily lives. The arithmetic consists almost entirely of the problems arising from the various occupations, though the teachers utilize opportunities so diligently that more number work has been done than the time-honored methods could make possible. There are no separate writing lessons, but the children have so many records to keep, receipts to make, excursions to describe, summaries of information to preserve, and letters to write, that they do far more writing than is done in the routine school, and are writing well. Formal reading lessons are very little emphasized, that little being in deference to custom; but the children are reading almost constantly in connection with their various pursuits. The language work has been largely incidental, and yet carefully attended to. The spelling has been confined to

words the children have needed to use, and has been taught when it was needed, not in set lessons. A record has been kept of words spelled, and every child is compiling his own dictionary. A great deal of elementary science has arisen from the cooking, gardening, and building, the teachers having lost few opportunities of bringing to consciousness the processes which underlie the daily work of the home and the community. The work in geography, in addition to its nature-study connections, has concerned industrial areas and centers, areas and centers of human development in this and other countries, and has dwelt with particular emphasis on Georgia as furnishing these areas or being able to furnish them. The history work has dealt with the developing life of the race, and has embodied a comparison of present conditions with the conditions of primitive life and with later stages of development. Primitive hunting, pastoral and agricultural life, as well as the later phases of city, commercial, and manufacturing life, are studied, not necessarily in succession, but as they seem to appeal to and arouse interest, and as they serve the purpose of cultivating in the children a consciousness of the steps by which the human race reached its present condition. The evolution of means of transportation, of roads and streets, of lighting and heating, of forms of food, clothing, and shelter, of gins, cards, spinning-wheels, looms, mills, sewing-machines, and other industrial implements and instruments, of books, paper, textile fabrics, and other accompaniments of human life, are being studied.

Excursions have been considered an important part of the regular work of the school. The children, with the help of the practice-teachers, have found and brought in from the woods near Athens, ferns, hepaticas, blood-roots, wood violets, asters, azaleas, sumacs, dogwoods, hawthorns, and hollies, and planted them in the piece of ground reserved for Georgia resources. They have brought yellow jessamine, honeysuckle, woodbine, Virginia creeper, and bamboo, and planted them against the walls of the building, or where other support could be furnished. These excursions have been utilized either in studying the life-history of the plants sought or in observing some other phase of nature. The expanding life of spring, the maturing life of autumn, and

the sheltered and hidden life of winter have been brought to consciousness and closely watched. Life-histories rather than mechanisms have been studied. Insects and birds have been considered mainly with reference to their homes, modes of life, and functions in the economy of nature. Excursions have also been made to the various industrial plants in and around Athens. The fire department, the water-works, the cloth-mills, the electric power-house, the cotton-gin, the "batting" -mill, and other places of interest have been made the basis of arithmetical calculations, of studies of simple physical truths, of elementary studies in economics, and of valuable language and composition work.

The children are brought into contact with a great wealth of literature. They read freely in connection with all their occupations, and with their geography, history, and nature-study. In addition to this, each grade makes a special study of some masterpiece of the world's literature. Indian, Greek, and Norse myths, the Arthurian and Homeric legends, the *Nibelungenlied*, and stories from the Old Testament have alternated with modern masterpieces. The Arthurian work of a year ago was especially fruitful in its results. The fourth grade had, in the illness and absence of the principal, shown a degree of restiveness which was at once despair for the practice-teachers and interesting study for the teacher of psychology. It was felt that much must be endeavored before giving up the cherished plan of building character, and helping the children to self-control was allowed to yield to a system of force. Influence after influence was tried with very little result. At last it was determined to ask a new teacher, who was in full sympathy with the theory of moral development held by the teacher of psychology and the principal of the practice school, to tell the children the Arthurian stories, and to let them live the Arthurian life as far as possible. The teacher of literature in the normal school entered into helpful co-operation, and the result was watched with intense interest by all who were in the secret. Very soon it was found that all the Arthurian literature in the libraries of both normal school and practice school was not sufficient to meet the demands of the children and the practice-teachers. The Atlanta library, the recent

gift of Mr. Carnegie, was called upon, and generously lent its resources. A jousting-place appeared on the playground, and was rarely without contending knights in the hours given to play. Helmets, shields, spears, swords, lances, and Arthurian costumes for both sexes were soon in process of manufacture, not only in the shop and the schoolroom, but in the homes of the children. Each boy in the grade assumed the name of one of Arthur's knights, and agreed to try to imitate his life and to gain his character. Each girl became a lady of Arthur's court, and was shortly acting well her part. No observer could doubt the value of the result. A noisy and restless school became orderly and obedient. Courtesy took the place of self-assertion on the playground, and evidence was obtained that many of the children were carrying the new spirit into their home conduct. "That is unknightly" became a strong deterrent; and, with the exception of the lapse, when the boys organized to attack a gypsy encampment, and then asserted, in justification of their behavior, that the gypsies were conspiring to steal their Queen Guinevere, the transformation was lasting. A little drama for public presentation was arranged by the children with the help of the teacher, and given at the end of the year. In the preparation of this, the children studied mediæval life and customs, built a small Arthurian castle, made miniature suits of armor, copied for dolls the dress of ladies, esquires, and pages, and became so familiar with the legends that the drama was merely an expression of the knowledge gained in their regular work.

Dramatization has been a very effective instrument in the study of literature. Last year the fifth grade dramatized and acted *Rip Van Winkle*. This year a beautiful entertainment given to the grade studying *Rip Van Winkle* by one of the school mothers showed in a gratifying way the extent of her sympathy. She and her children had given a large part of the leisure of a month in making artistic decorations for the refreshment table, every detail of decoration and, as far as possible, of the refreshments themselves being illustrative of the story. The story of *Siegfried* is now in process of dramatization by the sixth grade. The first and second grades have dramatized the *Sleeping Beauty*,

and the third grade the story of *Pocahontas*, for public presentation; but all the literary work, from the *Three Bears* of the first grade to the Greek stories of the sixth, has a large dramatic element, the dramatization of home life by the kindergarten children being a fit preparation for this. Story-telling has been a valuable instrument. The teacher of literature in the normal school has always co-operated, and has done such fine training work with the practice-teachers that most of them have been able to tell stories effectively. The children are encouraged to tell them, and like to use the privilege.

Play and other means of physical culture are receiving careful attention. Mr. Peabody's generosity made both indoor and outdoor gymnasium work possible, and provided space for indoor play in the occasional weather when outdoor life is not possible. The outdoor gymnasium was in place before the building was ready for occupancy, and has been used so constantly that it is already the worse for wear. An equipment for anthropometrical work has been provided, and the testing of the children for physical defects, with a view to remedial exercise in the gymnasium as well as of advice to parents, was begun last year. That it is not now in full operation because of the pressure of other work upon the director of the gymnasium is a source of deep regret to the managers of the school. Tests of sight, hearing, nervousness, and fatigue are, however, in progress under the direction of the teacher of psychology, who is projecting further tests in types of imagery and tone discrimination. Play has been encouraged and participated in by the practice-teachers. Last year the members of the junior class of the normal school played a number of time-honored games with the children, and invited suggestions from them for modifications. Afterward they worked over the plays with the purpose of giving them greater educational value, and then played again with the children, suggesting the changes and observing the results. The boys have made a baseball and football ground which is in constant use during the season. Basketball and tennis are available, but it is found that they do not appeal to children of the ages now in the practice school. The members of the senior class of the normal school are this year

beginning an extension of the play-work, from which much good is hoped. On a visit to some children in the suburbs of Athens they began to play with them, and very soon the children in the neighborhood congregated to look on. The newcomers were invited to join the game, and enjoyed it so much that it was determined to give notice of succeeding visits and play with as many children as possible. This has been done in several localities, with gratifying results. It is intended to encourage and extend this work, and to add story-telling and singing. Last year a Story-Tellers' Club, composed of Athens boys and girls, met regularly at the residence of the teacher of pedagogy and, after listening to and telling stories for an hour, played in the grounds the remainder of the afternoon. The co-operation of the teacher of literature and one of the teachers of the practice school made the work interesting and profitable. An investigation of the play-preferences of children, and the reasons for these preferences, is now in progress in connection with the child-study work of the senior class of the normal school.

Æsthetic culture is not forgotten. There has been an earnest attempt to make both the interior and exterior of the building beautiful. The conditions have been too complex and the work too new to admit of best results; yet something has been done. Mr. Peabody's generosity made it possible to provide for each schoolroom a few good reproductions of fine pictures and masterpieces of sculpture. The central hall has pictures of the Egyptian pyramids, the ruins of the Roman Forum, the Roman Colosseum, the Alhambra, and one view of St. Peter's Church. A large amphora and a set of Greek vases are there, and a "Winged Victory" is to be added as soon as possible. Growing plants are to be found in every room of the building, and the children are encouraged to care for them. Clematis, wistaria, climbing roses, honeysuckle, Virginia creeper, bamboo, yellow jessamine, and Boston ivy have been planted against the walls, and are beginning to cover them. Flowers, shrubs, and ornamental trees, which have been planted with a view to artistic effect, are growing. The children are encouraged to make all their constructions as beautiful as possible, and attention is constantly called to the beautiful

in nature. The care of the rooms, the decoration of the lunch-table, the care of their own persons, the work of the garden, the building and furnishing of playhouses, the decoration of pottery, the weaving of rugs, the dressing of dolls, and, indeed, all the occupations of the school, are utilized for lessons in beauty. Drawing and painting have been used as a means of expression in connection with nearly all the work the children do; but there has also been much art work with direct reference to the more purely artistic value. The children have painted landscapes, and made designs for the covers of their cookery and garden books, for Christmas cards, Easter cards, and valentines.

Tree-planting has been carried on very assiduously, the children and practice-teachers doing the work under the stimulation of the principal. There are now in the grounds water oaks, willow oaks, white and red oaks, elms, magnolias, cedars, hickories, walnuts, pecans, apples, peaches, pears, figs, and olives. A number of mulberry trees have been planted with a view to silk-culture in the future. Grape vines are growing on the walls of the building and on a frame made by the children. The planting of trees brought in from the neighboring woods, which has already been alluded to, goes on every spring and autumn.

The kitchen garden has been successful. The children have used vegetables of their own growing for their lunches, and have made presents of them to friends of the school. The growth of one or two varieties as a productive industry is being considered. This garden has been the center of many sorts of work. The children have thought out and drawn plans for it, as it has been changed from season to season and from year to year; have measured and laid it out, dug and prepared it for planting, studied its soil and fertilized it, calculated the quantities of seeds needed and their cost, macadamized its walks, watched the growth of its plants, painted its flowers, read with reference to the best methods of its culture, kept records of sowing, germinating, blossoms, and maturity, studied the insects that frequented it, and watched the effect of heat, cold, light, moisture, and winds upon it. They have studied the life-history of the plants which have been cultivated, and learned about their food-values, their functions in

enriching or exhausting the soil, and the modifications produced in them by cultivation.

The woodwork has been very practical. The members of one grade built a log cabin large enough to admit one or two of their number in connection with the study of pioneer life in America. Another grade has made a pigeon-house and a wren-house which have been placed in position to entice the birds. Another still has made a scuppernong arbor and planted the vines. A Powhatan wigwam was built in connection with early colonial history. A syrup-mill, a primitive gin, and a wheelbarrow have been made by different grades. The children of the first grade always make and furnish a playhouse. Supports for vines, shelves, and boxes for flowers, tool-boxes, pencil-boxes, quilting-frames, and various other articles needed in the school life, have been made and used. In connection with their studies of primitive life, the children have constructed tepees, Eskimo huts, weapons, household utensils, canoes, dug-outs, boats, looms, and mills.

There have been no "courses" of sewing, "samplers," or "sewing-books," but the children have hemmed napkins and doilies for the dining-room, made cooking-aprons for themselves, hemstitched a set of napkins, and dressed dolls of various nationalities. A group of dolls in Arthurian costumes made by the children has been preserved. The first-grade children have made and stuffed small mattresses, hemmed sheets and coverlets, and made curtains for their playhouse. Baskets have been made of raffia, of the Georgia wire grass, of white-oak splits and shucks. Woolen rugs and straw mats for playhouses have been woven, pottery of various sorts has been modeled, and a number of other articles made.

As was said at the outset, all this construction has arisen from, or been closely related to, the needs of daily life, sometimes that of the children themselves, sometimes that of a people or period being studied. For weeks before last Christmas, for instance, the children were busy making gifts. In the kitchen they made enough candy for each child in the school to give away some. In the shop, baskets were made to hold the candy, and some of the lower grades cut tissue paper and wrapped it. Christmas in other

lands was being studied, and dolls were being dressed in the costumes of those lands. Wooden articles of various sorts were being made for presents to parents or teachers. The result was a tree loaded with gifts made by the children for their teachers and parents, as well as for each other. At one time the first-grade children were interested in Indian life, and wished to bake corn cakes just as the Indians did. They were allowed to do this, and led to compare their methods with those of the present. Later, one of the upper grades gathered up the ashes, built a "hopper," and "dripped" some lye. Later still, a dye was needed for the raffia used in making baskets which the children had designed. One of the grades had an excursion in order to collect certain barks which had been suggested to them, and experimented with these until they obtained the color they wanted. The dye needed to be "set" with an alkali, and they used for this purpose the lye which had previously been made. In studying means of transportation, among other pieces of construction was a small Chinese wheelbarrow. Later, the grade united in making one large wheelbarrow of the present American type. This wheelbarrow is now in constant use in connection with the garden.

The correlation of other subjects with the industrial work has been constantly alluded to. The difficulty has not been in finding opportunities for correlation, but in utilizing the wealth of material suggested. A few weeks ago the fourth grade made some chocolate in their cooking hour. The teacher placed before them the powdered chocolate, the cracked bean, the whole bean, and a model of the fruit, and readily developed the process of preparing the powdered chocolate. She then led them to test it qualitatively for food substances, and showed a card giving the relative quantities of these. Some very simple calculations in percentages grew out of this, and other arithmetical processes were needed in calculating the quantity of milk and sugar needed for the beverage and the food substances which they would add. The action of heat upon the mixture, and the effect of the food substances contained in it on the body, were discussed while the chocolate was cooking; and when it was finished, the table was spread and a lunch served. A guest had been invited, and the children told

stories for her entertainment. When they returned to the regular teacher, she showed them some pictures of the cocoa tree and of the fruit in various stages of preparation. These were discussed, and made the basis of several language lessons, without destroying the interest of the children in the knowledge they were gaining. As the work went on from day to day, the areas in which the cocoa tree is cultivated were discussed and their geography reviewed. In connection with Mexico, the children were told a story of Montezuma drinking chocolate from a golden cup, and they read about the Aztecs, their life and their subjugation by Cortez. A written account of the culture of the cocoa tree and of the manufacture of chocolate was prepared by each child before the close of the work.

Mr. Peabody's gift for the library was five hundred dollars, but a sum originally meant for another purpose was, with his approbation, diverted to the library, and, by using small sums obtained from other sources, books to the value of about one thousand dollars have been accumulated. The pupils and the practice-teachers have made good use of the reference books, and the children have constantly taken books from it for outside reading. It has become so indispensable a part of the work that each teacher in training will go away feeling that she cannot teach without a library; but it is still much too small to meet the need adequately.

The managers of the school have tried to keep the parents of the children in sympathetic contact with the life and aims of the school, and in the majority of cases they have met with a very gratifying response. Last year a mothers' meeting was held once a month. This year the mothers have been frequently invited to the school, and have come in good numbers. The classrooms are always open to them as visitors, and some use this privilege. Next year they will be invited to unite with the teachers in studying some of the problems of child-training.

As has been said, the work has had opposition and misunderstanding to face. There are many good people who, accustomed to older forms, have not had time to keep in touch with current educational theory, and are afraid of innovations. The work is

yet too new for its best results to be manifest, and some parents prefer methods which have stood the test of many years. Nevertheless, there have always been more applicants for admission than could be accommodated, and a number of parents have been steadfast in their intelligent confidence.

The senior class of the normal school numbered eighty last year. The majority of these young men and young women were from the country, and have returned to it. They have formed themselves into groups of two or three for the purpose of establishing schools in needy rural communities. They intend to try to become parts of the community life and to make the school a social center. They want to improve schoolhouses and grounds, consolidate schools, transport children, establish libraries and shops, plant gardens, secure the co-operation of parents, and conduct their schools so as to develop the community life in the best possible way.